



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Public Hearing

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Testimony

By

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify about Raised Bill 6302, *An Act Requiring A Report Concerning Provisions For Law School Graduates*.

The University of Connecticut Law School wholeheartedly shares your concerns regarding the obligation of every law school to provide full and accurate information to prospective students about the job prospects they face as they decide whether to embark upon professional training. We also agree that it is our responsibility to do what we can to counsel students and graduates to ensure that each graduate maximizes his or her career potential. We are proud of our record on both counts, and we hope that we will inform your deliberations. Our goal is simply to convey a brief account of what the state's only public law school is already doing to address the concerns we all share.

Candid discussions about job prospects, the employment market, and the issue of debt are the norm in the admissions process. At open houses for prospective applicants, current students attend in large numbers to candidly respond to concerns from those contemplating legal education. Admissions professionals are also joined by professionals for Student Finance and the Career Planning Center to address any questions about any aspect of financial aid awards or employment prospects. The Law School embraces transparency and makes its information available to those faced with important personal decisions about the commitment, expense and possible outcomes facing law students today.

Career Counseling/Placement Services:

All students and graduates of the Law School are offered ongoing access to the services of the Career Planning Center (CPC) on the Law School campus. The services and information available from the CPC are also accessible via the Internet. The CPC was reorganized and all policies were evaluated and revised at the beginning of the recent economic crisis, in anticipation of changes in the practice of law and legal hiring trends, and to be more responsive and accessible to the needs of the community it serves.

The CPC and the Dean work closely with other Law School departments and the legal community to enhance employment opportunities for our graduates. Our new CPC model places heavy emphasis on mandatory information programs and personal counseling sessions. It is designed to offer transparent and early interaction with all law students to encourage thoughtful and realistic engagement in long-term career objectives and goals. It focuses closely on the individual job-seeker and the development of personal skills and objectives. Information and historical data are readily available in the CPC and online on the Law School website.

Services offered to UConn Law **students and graduates** include:

- individual career planning counseling with a full-time CPC professional. Five licensed attorneys and a seasoned career counselor manage the needs of our students and graduates. Each counselor is charged with a particular practice area (i.e., public interest, private sector, clerkships, government) to better assist students and graduates as they define their long-term goals;
- access to the Symplicity career management software used by the Law School and endorsed by the National Association of Law Placement (NALP), the national professional organization for legal employers and law school career offices;
- the provision of well-publicized and accurate employment statistics on the website and in Law School publications. Employment information is accessible and reflects reality. The CPC holds Legal Market Update Information Sessions every April. These are mandatory for students. The program provides attendees with an update on the most recent employment statistics, application deadlines and career options. The Law School employment rate, during the worst downturn in the legal employment market in at least 75 years, has remained relatively stable. Eighty-six percent of the class graduated in 2010 is employed. The eight percent of that class still seeking employment are a top priority, and most are consulting with the CPC. The goal of the CPC is to bring the number seeking employment to zero, or as close to it as possible. The CPC believes that it is ahead of the curve in the revival of the legal market, which is slowly rebounding. Given the Draconian nature of the economic crash, the strength of our relationships with employers and the intelligence and reputation of our students has helped maintain a rate of employment that reflects decline but not despair. The classes yet to graduate, those who have had the particular benefit of the highly customized CPC policies for their full enrollment (particularly during the first crucial year of law school) should reflect the benefits of enhanced networking and other employment opportunities. (See Attachment A for 2010 statistics and an historical perspective);
- the ability to explore career options online. Employment opportunities for students and graduates are posted on Symplicity. The CPC recognizes that employers often have recruiting needs that fall outside of any formal recruiting programs. To assist with those needs the CPC maintains a free, online, interactive recruiting site, Symplicity (<https://law-uconn-csm.symplicity.com/employers/>), where employers may post jobs directly. It is updated daily and allows students and graduates to review individual job postings by employers and to sort them by personal preferences, including keywords, employer type, practice areas, position type, industry, geographic preferences, and other factors. (See Attachment B for Symplicity Usage to date.);
- assistance with resume preparation and refinement, and the ability to post individual resumes, writing samples and letters in the database for review by legal employers. (See Attachment B for Counseling statistics to date);

- the option to work with counselors to individually refine job search strategies and interviewing techniques;
- access to non-UConn-specific job postings from a variety of sources, including a fee-based online database for public service jobs offered (free) to UConn students and graduates. The students and lawyers may also use a subscriber-only handbook for government honors and internships without paying the user fee, the BYU Intercollegiate Job Bank for graduate job postings from other law schools, a database for jobs in the non-profit sector, and a national service that culls all legal jobs from classified ads;
- access to outside reference materials helpful in informing career choices and strategies. The CPC prepares many handouts to assist students and graduates. All are available in the office and electronically in the document library of Symplicity. A sampling of titles follows: *Bar Admission Guide*; *Interviewing Skills & Strategies*; *Negotiating the Best Possible Job Offer*; *Negotiating with Small & Mid-Size Firms*; *Public Interest Interviewing*; *Internet Resource Booklet*; *Resume Samples*; *Tips for Evening Students*; *An Introduction to Judicial Clerkships*; *Guide to Judicial Internships*; *First Year Guide*; *An Introduction to Fellowships*; *Public Interest Guide*; *Guide to Government Careers*; *Guide to Bar Associations*, and
- the option of attending dozens of on-campus events targeting legal employment, including panels of attorneys discussing many traditional and non-traditional areas of practice, employment fairs, workshops for enhanced resume preparation or networking skills training, and ongoing career information sessions. For example, the CPC has offered 111 workshops between August, 2009 and March, 2011.

Students are now required to interact with the CPC early in their careers, making UConn one of the first law schools (and still one of the few) to mandate early and ongoing interaction with the CPC.

Among the services for students are:

- required first year student orientations sessions, held to accommodate both day and evening students. These sessions inform students about CPC services, programs, and resources. The presentation covers job source statistics, timing of employment offers, recruiting cycles, and professionalism. Students also receive a *Career Planning Guide*, which provides more detailed information on the office, career opportunities, CPC policies and student responsibilities, and yearly checklists;
- the availability of seven resume and cover letter writing workshops each November. These are interactive roundtable sessions where students are given the tools to draft effective marketing pieces to use in their job searches. One of the sessions is specifically geared to public interest law applicants;
- the opportunity to attend one of the mock interviews offered at least three times a year to help students practice interviewing skills. Twenty minute practice interviews are conducted by employers and professional staff to allow students an opportunity to experience the interview process early in the season to hone interviewing skills and receive constructive feedback;
- a robust on-campus interviewing (OCI) program. The CPC invites potential employers to come to campus to conduct interviews with students for both summer and post-graduate opportunities. Students bid on participating employers and schedule interviews on-line through Symplicity. Fall OCI typically draws mid-size and large law firm participants from the surrounding region, including Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, and Boston.

Government agencies, public interest organizations, corporations and small law firms typically participate in the spring OCI programs. (See Attachment C);

- inclusion in one or more of the many regional and/or specialized career fairs with which the CPC has a relationship, allowing job-seekers to expand searches and interview options beyond the Northeast or in specialized practice areas.
- the opportunity to apply for an out of state position. The CPC runs three off-campus interview programs in the fall exclusively for UConn Law students in Washington DC, Boston and New York City. These programs bring legal employers from the Boston, Washington DC, and New York areas together to meet with our students prior to the start of the Fall semester;
- the ability to contribute to the public good. The School of Law and the CPC are committed to promoting public interest and pro bono initiatives. The CPC provides funding to help students defray the cost of travel to public interest interviews and career fairs such as the NYU Public Interest Legal Career Fair, NYC Bar Public Interest Career Reception, Equal Justice Works Conference & Career Fair, and fellowship interviews. The CPC provides targeted programming with public interest panels, fellowship programs, and a specific public interest resume workshop. Additionally, the CPC advises and assists the Public Interest Law Group (PILG) with administering the application process and distributing summer fellowships to students each year. In 2010 just over \$52,000 was awarded to fourteen fellows. Additionally, the CPC was instrumental in increasing the value of the awards and streamlining the application process. (See Attachment D);
- the exploration of public interest and law school affordability options. The CPC created a Public Interest Research Assistant position within the office to promote public interest opportunities, explore Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) opportunities, and educate the community. Six students have held the position to date.

Additional opportunities for **Law School graduates** include:

- many opportunities for networking among graduates at free events hosted by the External Relations Office, the Dean, the Alumni Association, the Law School Foundation, and the CPC, among others. Events are frequently held on campus and in other locations including a number of cities in Connecticut, New York City, Boston, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and other places;
- access to ongoing information about alumni and other professional gatherings, posted online or received by free email subscription;
- enhanced networking offered via social media such as the Law School Facebook page and the Law School's LinkedIn page, and
- participation in the Law School's own Online Community for graduates, allowing UConn lawyers to interact and network with one another on a password-protected website dedicated to fostering closer alumni relationships and professional connections.

Law School Debt

All law school applicants receive substantial information about the financial ramifications of attending law school. Applicants are encouraged to review the School's employment and other statistics. Every Law School open house and information event contains information about student finance, debt, available aid, and reference to detailed financial information on our website.

<http://www.law.uconn.edu/node/1069> and <http://www.law.uconn.edu/bursar/business-office/explanation-tuition-fees>.

All matriculated students with financial aid participate in counseling about loans and debt obligations while in school. They also have mandatory entrance and exit Student Finance interviews at the Law School. The Student Finance Office oversees all student aid awards, including loans. Most students and graduates of the Law School have student loans at the time of graduation. Applicants for financial aid complete an institutional aid application and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine eligibility and need. The award covers the estimated cost of legal education and usual living expenses, adjusted by the level of need.

- The majority of law students receive their loans under the Federal Stafford Direct Loan Program, repayable at the fixed rate of 6.8%. Federal student loan programs require recipients to be enrolled in an educational program.
- Federal GRAD PLUS Loans, another federal program available to entering law students, has largely replaced more expensive private loans. When compared to private loans, GRAD PLUS loans offer a more favorable interest rate and flexibility in terms of forbearance and deferments. The rate for Grad Plus Loans is fixed at 7.9% with the federal rebate for timely payments.
- Private loans are also available for qualified law students but very few, if any, use private lenders for tuition and law school expenses.
- Some eligible students can and do secure private loans (amounts up to \$15,000 depending on lender) to pay for the bar exam and living expenses while studying.
- Although student loan repayment typically begins 6-9 months after graduation, most loan companies offer loan consolidation (including extended repayment time), deferrals or forbearance for borrowers experiencing demonstrated financial hardship. The Law School is not part of these agreements between our graduates and the lenders.
- Through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) of 2007, two loan repayment programs were implemented; Income Based Repayment (IBR) or an Income Contingent Repayment (ICR). Borrowers do not have to meet employment criteria (i.e., public interest work) to be eligible for IBR.
- The CCRAA created the Loan Forgiveness for Public Service Employees Program. A number of employment positions including higher education, Peace Corps, Americorps, non-profit organizations and legal services, qualify for LFPSE. Under this program, qualified borrowers (after 10/1/2007) must make 120 separate payments (10 years) on qualified student loans. After this repayment period all other loans will be forgiven. In order to take advantage of this, eligible borrowers must also be in either IBR or ICR plan.
- While law students and graduates are eligible for these programs and it is assumed that some are participating, the Law School does not have access to data for its graduates because such forgiveness occurs **after** graduation and is private financial information.
- While information specific to the law school regarding loan default rates is unavailable (it is only supplied for the university as a whole), it is assumed to be very low. The Student Finance Office at the Law School receives fewer than five requests for information about loan repayment problems each year.

I hope this information is helpful and would be happy to answer any questions. As always, thank you for your continued support of the University of Connecticut and its Law School.

Attachment A

CAREER PLANNING CENTER GRADUATE REPORT – CLASS OF 2010

GRADUATE DISTRIBUTION

(200 of 212 graduates responded)

Employed*	86.0%
Advanced Degree	2.5%
Not Seeking	3.5%
Seeking	8.0%

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

New England	82.6%
Middle Atlantic	7.6%
East North Central	0.6%
West North Central	0.0%
South Atlantic.....	4.7%
East South Central	0.0%
West South Central	1.2%
Mountain	1.7%
Pacific	1.7%
Foreign	0.0%

SELECTED STATE DISTRIBUTION

Our graduates accepted positions in 16 different states and the District of Columbia. The most popular locations this year were:

Connecticut	65.7%
New York	14.5%
Massachusetts	7.0%
DC Metro Area	4.1%
California	1.2%
New Hampshire	1.2%
New Mexico	1.2%
Rhode Island.....	1.2%
Texas	1.2%

EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION

Academic 2.9%
Law School Administration 0.6%
Other Higher Ed Position 2.3%

Business 20.3%
Accounting Firms 2.3%
Banking/Finance 1.2%
Insurance 2.9%
Legal Temporary Agency 1.2%
Technology/eCommerce Companies 2.9%
Other Corporate 9.9%

Government 14.0%
Federal 3.5%
State 9.9%
Other 0.6%

Judicial Clerkships 9.9%
Federal 2.9%
State 7.0%

Military 1.2%

Private Practice 47.7%
Solo Practice 1.2%
2-10 Attorneys 16.3%
11-25 Attorneys 6.4%
26-50 Attorneys 3.5%
51-100 Attorneys 3.5%
100-250 Attorneys 5.8%
251-500 Attorneys 4.7%
501+ Attorneys 6.4%

Public Interest 4.1%
Community Education/Organization 1.2%
Policy/Advocacy 0.6%
Public Defender 1.2%
Other 1.2%

Historic employment statistics

2003-2009

Year	% Employed
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2003	95.8
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2004	94.6
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2005	95.8
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2006	94.5
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2007	93.8
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2008	92.2
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2009	89.9
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Attachment B

Symplicity Usage as of March 1, 2011:

91% of students have logged into Symplicity

45% of graduates have logged into Symplicity

79% of students have a resume posted on Symplicity

29% of graduates have a resume posted on Symplicity

CPC Counseling:

763 personal counseling appointments with students and graduates were held from 3/1/10 - 3/2/11. This number does not include walk-ins, follow-ups or resume reviews.

First year law student participation:

157 first year individual initial counseling appointments have been held of a class of approximately 180 currently enrolled first year students.

Attachment C

Law School OCI Fall Recruitment programs

Fall Recruitment Statistics

These statistics represent the employers who participated in CPC fall recruitment programs.

Year	Law Firms	Government	Corporations	Public Interest	Total Employers
2004	103	9	1	1	114
2005	96	20	5	3	124
2006	109	28	3	11	151
2007	108	15	4	5	132
2008	83	26	3	1	113
2009	109	19	8	1	137
2010	48	19	1	2	70

Law School OCI Spring Recruitment programs

Spring Recruitment Statistics

These statistics represent the employers who participated in CPC spring recruitment programs.

Year	Law Firms	Government	Corporations	Public Interest	Total Employers
2005	35	12	8	13	68
2006	27	16	10	20	73
2007	28	11	6	6	51
2008	47	12	11	15	85
2009	19	18	7	10	54
2010	33	12	4	6	55

Attachment D

PILG Summer Fellowship Funding						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Awarded	\$30,000	\$36,000	\$38,000	\$50,400	\$60,000	\$52,114
Fellowship Amount	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Number of Applicants	25	16	26	30	20	24
Number of Fellowships	10	13	11	16	15	14
Full Fellowship	10	10	8	10	15	11
Partial Fellowship	0	3	3	6	0	3